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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

**SUPERVISOR RAFAEL MANDELMAN INTRODUCES NEW
LEGISLATION TO EXPEDITE THE REVIVAL OF GAY BATHHOUSES
IN SAN FRANCISCO**

SAN FRANCISCO — Today, Supervisor Rafael Mandelman introduced legislation to expedite the revival of gay bathhouses in San Francisco. The ordinance will repeal Article 26 of the Police Code, which lodges with the Police Department responsibility for the permitting of new bathhouses and contains outdated and unnecessary regulations including requirements for such bathhouses to maintain a daily register of patrons and confusing language regarding the permissibility of locked rooms. Because of Article 26, the San Francisco Police Department has been unable to issue permits for potential operators who have spent months trying to open gay bathhouses.

“We’ve come a long way on the way to bring back gay bathhouses to San Francisco,” said District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman. “It’s encouraging that there are entrepreneurs who are actually trying to open these venues, although it is frustrating that we keep finding new barriers in their way. I am nonetheless committed to clearing a path for these operators, and we will continue clearing away obstacles as they and we identify them.”

In 2020, Supervisor Mandelman passed legislation to remove from the Health Code restrictions on the operation of gay bathhouses and other adult sex venues dating back to the eighties that had required the monitoring of patrons’ sexual activities and prohibited locked doors in such facilities.

In 2022, Supervisor Mandelman passed legislation that amended the Planning Code to permit gay bathhouses in areas of the City that have strong histories with the LGBTQ+ community, including the Castro and Upper Market neighborhoods, SoMa, and the Tenderloin.

Before the AIDS epidemic, there were many venues where men met with other men for sex, including bathhouses. In 1984, the City sued the operators of several of these

businesses, citing them as a public health nuisance. This caused many of these businesses to shutter and contributed greatly to the stigma around gay sex for decades to come.

“I’m thankful to Supervisor Mandelman for his leadership in removing outdated barriers to reopen bathhouses in San Francisco,” said Supervisor Matt Dorsey. “The South of Market neighborhood I represent has a long and storied history with these establishments. With hindsight, we now know that restrictions adopted decades ago at advent of the AIDS crisis likely deprived at-risk communities of sex-positive spaces where information about safer sex practices might have saved lives. We’ve made remarkable progress in sexual health in years since — from PrEP and antiretroviral therapy, to dramatically enhanced viral suppression, ‘U=U’ and more. It’s past time for anti-bathhouse restrictions to go, and I’m proud to join Supervisor Mandelman as a co-sponsor in these worthwhile efforts.”

“Opening a new business in San Francisco is difficult enough,” said Joel Agüero, owner of Castro Baths. “Supervisor Mandelman and his office are removing a significant blocker to the permit process, accelerating the opening of Castro Baths, and supporting the growing community of would-be bathhouse operators and attendees who seek to revive San Francisco’s once-thriving bathhouse culture.”

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